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**REMINDER
MARITIME TRANSPORTATION SECURITY ACT (MSTA) OF 2002
SELF-CREDITING EXERCISES FOR VESSELS**

Vessels required to have a Coast Guard approved Vessel Security Plan and that have been engaged in regulated activities since July 1, 2004 were required to complete their first exercise by December 31, 2005. For those vessels that began regulated activities after July 1, 2004, an exercise must be conducted no later than 18 months from the first day of commencement of operations, otherwise referred to as the plan implementation date.

Vessel Security Plan holders may satisfy this requirement by voluntary and substantial participation in a U.S. Coast Guard Captain of the Port (COTP) sponsored Area Maritime Security (AMS) Plan exercise when scheduled in their area. If no AMS Plan exercise is scheduled by the U.S. Coast Guard COTP for their area within the period that the annual exercise of their VSP is required, vessel owners/operators with approved VSP's must design and execute an exercise of their own or participate in a group exercise under the auspices of another industry, port authority or governmental group.

If a vessel chooses to conduct an exercise at the end of the 18 month window as allowed, the next required annual exercise compliance date cannot again be deferred for another 18 months. Exercises are required to be conducted once per calendar year.

Exercises must be designed to be vessel specific or part of a cooperative exercise program that exercises applicable facility and vessel security plans or comprehensive port exercises.

The exercise should validate the adequacy of:

- 1) Response to changes in MARSEC Levels;
- 2) Procedures for interfacing with facilities and other vessels;
- 3) Declarations of Security (DoS);
- 4) Communications;
- 5) Security measures for access control;
- 6) Security measures for restricted areas;
- 7) Security measures for handling cargo;
- 8) Security measures for delivery of vessel stores and bunkers;

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- 9) Security measures for monitoring; and
- 10) Security incident procedures.

Exercises of VSP's under 33 CFR Part 104.230 are self-credited, and the regulations, provide broad latitude to plan holders in establishing how they can best test the functional adequacy of their security plan.

Plan holders may take credit for having performed the exercise if all objectives of the exercise are met, the exercise is evaluated, and a proper record is generated. 33 CFR Part 104.230(c)(4) and (5) outlines the minimum requirements for an exercise to meet the intent of the regulation; specifically the exercise must be a full and comprehensive test of the vessel's communication ability, notification procedures, elements of coordination, resource availability, and response in the event of an incident.

Records of exercises must be retained by the Vessel Security Officers (VSO) for U. S. Coast Guard review for a period of two (2) years as per 33 CFR 104.235. The record should include the date the exercise was held, a description of the exercise, a list of participants, and any best practices or lessons learned which may improve the VSP.

For additional information or clarification regarding this Marine Safety Bulletin, please contact CWO3 Jack R. Boyko at the above number or address.



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